

Personal Statement

As a child, throughout my teens and continuing into adult hood, I have always had an appreciation for marine life. It has been a big part of my life, starting with fishing trips with my dad, evolving into a deep appreciation and desire for understanding the importance of our oceans, lakes, and streams. Although I still love to fish, it has turned into an appreciation for marine life rather than just a hobby. I think about the trash and debris that makes its way into Elizabeth river, the construction run off spilling into our water despite filters near stormwater drains, and how the Chesapeake Bay's health is of utmost importance to not only the east coast but the rest of the US. As I make my way through my years of college one question I have remains the same-how can I make a difference? Initially this started with recycling, as it does for most people, but that only does so much. While fishing I like to leave my fishing areas cleaner than they were before I arrived. I started picking up other peoples fishing waste, like bundles of line and hooks and weights to throw away. Then this turned into walking the shorelines after my trips and cleaning up everything, like broken bottles, plastic bags; pretty much anything that shouldn't be there. This is a good start but I know I can do more. One place I'd like to reach out to for an internship/ employment, or even volunteer work is the Ryan Resilience Lab on Colley Avenue. They do conservation work around ODU and with ODU, including coming up with ways to minimize shoreline degradation and one of their biggest projects, river restoration in the Elizabeth River. The Elizabeth River has suffered decades of pollution due to sewage waste, highway runoff pollution, fertilizer etc. As someone who sees this daily and can recognize these issues, I believe I could help make a difference with them and enjoy my time doing it. The lab has restored oyster reefs including the largest oyster reef project the Elizabeth River has seen. Early on in my college career, I wanted to be a biologist. This turned into a focus on hydrology and water stability. After many years, the end goal is marine conservation. Conserving our marine wildlife is the backbone to environmental health, and with industrialization and recent political events, marine conservation is incredibly important for the rest of future for a healthy planet and ecosystem.